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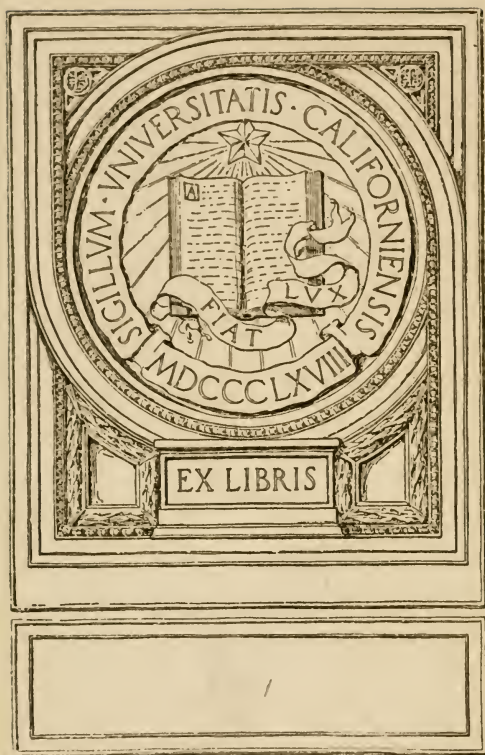
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THE BRIBE

SEUMAS O'KELLY



THE ABBEY THEATRE SERIES



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THE BRIBE

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

BY SEUMAS O'KELLY

Author of

"The Shuiler's Child," "The Matchmakers" &c.

MAUNSEL & COMPANY, LTD.
DUBLIN AND LONDON

1914

THE
LIFE OF
SEUMAS O'KELLY
BY
JAMES J. O'KELLY

CHARACTERS

JOHN KIRWAN, *A shopkeeper*

MRS. KIRWAN, *His wife*

MARY KIRWAN, *His sister*

MRS. DIAMOND, *Another shopkeeper*

DOCTOR LUKE DIAMOND, *Her son*

DOCTOR POWER O'CONNOR

DOCTOR JACK POWER O'CONNOR, *His son*

MR. TOOMEY, *Clerk of union*

MRS. COONEY, *A nurse*

A PAUPER

POOR LAW GUARDIANS

SCENE—A Sitting-room off a shop in an Irish Country Town, and in the boardroom of the Garrymore Union.

Two days elapse between Acts One and Two, and two months between Acts Two and Three.

THE BRIBE

ACT I

SCENE.—*A sittingroom off a shop. A door in background to right leads to the inner part of house. In centre of background a sideboard with silver trays and glasses. Another door, left wing, leads to shop. A fireplace, right wing. A table in centre with books that are never read in four corners ; some chairs about. It is early afternoon. MARY KIRWAN, about fifty, tall, neat, dignified, is polishing glasses at sideboard. MRS. DIAMOND, a little older, spare, dark, pessimistic, but distinguished looking despite somewhat shabby clothes, with luminous questioning eyes, enters by door to shop.*

MRS. DIAMOND. Good-day, Mary. Busy as usual.

MARY. Kept going, Mrs. Diamond.

MRS. DIAMOND. I am glad I found you alone, Mary. I wanted to speak to you about —

MARY. I know. About the appointment of dispensary doctor. You are anxious ?

MRS. DIAMOND. I am. You know my son, Luke, is in for the position ?

MARY. The whole town and country know that Doctor Luke Diamond and Dr. Jack Power O'Connor are like a pair of gladiators in the arena of the Garrymore dispensary district.

MRS. DIAMOND. Mary, don't speak of it so lightly—not to me.

MARY. A power of money, I'm told, is already put up in bets as to which one will win and which one will lose.

MRS. DIAMOND. It means very much to me and my son. *You* understand me, Mary.

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MARY (*changing her tone*). Indeed I do, Margaret. I am anxious, too. I feel ——

MRS. DIAMOND. Afraid ? Afraid Luke will be beaten ?

MARY. Sometimes I am afraid he will.

MRS. DIAMOND. Ah ! . . . I feel as if something terrible, something dreadful, hangs on this business.

MARY. If merit alone told—and it ought to—Luke should get the post.

MRS. DIAMOND. Think of the struggle I've had to have him educated.

MARY. I know all that. But I also see that Doctor Power O'Connor has great influence, and will use it for his son. It is only natural.

MRS. DIAMOND. What view does your brother, John Kirwan, take ? You know all the power he has as chairman of the board.

MARY. John is very reticent. His position makes him cautious.

MRS. DIAMOND. Speak to him on behalf of Luke, Mary.

MARY. I have done so already.

MRS. DIAMOND. Dwell on the examinations he passed, the distinctions, prizes and scholarships he won.

MARY. It is not so much his cleverness I like. It is something in the young man himself—some eagerness, character, what you might call strength.

MRS. DIAMOND. And then they talk of favouring a man like young Power O'Connor.

MARY. Well, young Doctor Jack is popular. All men in his position who are free-and-easy, empty headed, stupid, are popular in a place like Garrymore.

MRS. DIAMOND. Grinders and professors were hammering at him for years. They could scarcely get him through. (*Mrs. Kirwan comes from shop. She is a weary, untidy, sharp woman.*)

MRS. KIRWAN. I am dead beat behind that counter.

MARY. Did you do the accounts ?

MRS. KIRWAN. I did, and what with cantankerous

customers, people nosing for credit, and children looking for change, I feel worn out.

MARY. I will mind the shop until the dinner is ready.
(*Exits, shop door.*)

MRS. KIRWAN (*in an uninviting tone*). Won't you rest yourself, Mrs. Diamond?

MRS. DIAMOND. I only came for a moment. (JOHN KIRWAN, *big, looking more a man of the fields than a shop-keeper, enters from door to house, a paper in his hand.*)

KIRWAN (*in a voice of constraint*). You're welcome, Mrs. Diamond.

MRS. DIAMOND. Thanks, Mr. Kirwan.

KIRWAN. I had to search the house high up and low down for that paper. (*He throws it on the sideboard.*) Is'n't the weather holding up wonderful, ma'am?

MRS. DIAMOND. Yes, indeed. (MRS. KIRWAN *sits down, her back to MRS. DIAMOND. KIRWAN turns partly away from her, too. MRS. DIAMOND looks nervously from one to the other. They remain frigid.*) I must speak with Mary in the shop. (*Exits, door to shop.*)

KIRWAN. I thought she was going to speak about her son. The look of that woman always gives me a feeling that she's searching for something in a person's mind and sure to fish up whatever rotten thing lies there.

MRS. KIRWAN (*with a bitter little laugh*). Well, when I think of Maggie Diamond and her huxtery I can scarcely credit my senses. The smell of herrings and onions from her clothes, and now her son a doctor!

KIRWAN. Bedad, the world is changing.

MRS. KIRWAN. In *our* day a doctor needed to be the son of a gentleman.

KIRWAN. In a way it's great credit to her and she left a lone widow the best part of her life with no great way of living.

MRS. KIRWAN. Putting her upstart of a son against Dr. Power O'Connor's son! I wouldn't put it a-past her to ask you to vote for him. She has brass enough for it.

KIRWAN. She did not, then. But Luke himself did.

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MRS. KIRWAN. He did ? Oh, but he's the dead spit of herself, with her spectacles and her books and her reading and her big pair of sorrowful eyes behind the counter.

KIRWAN (*a little amused*). That's her right enough, Fanny.

MRS. KIRWAN. I often thought she'd do for an image of a holy picture, some saint or martyr that was scarified all her life—God forgive me for making the comparison ! Did you give the pup the go-by when he asked for the vote ?

KIRWAN. I told him I was not going to vote, but to leave it all in the hands of the board. (*A little pompously.*) There are times when a chairman, in the exercise of his discretion, must stand apart from heated controversies.

MRS. KIRWAN. John, I'm too long your wife now to talk to me as if I was a board of guardians. Keep that for the clowns.

KIRWAN. Fanny, you don't understand public life.

MRS. KIRWAN. Well, I understand *life*, and you're going to vote for Dr. Jack Power O'Connor, if for no other reason, then for the sake of their custom.

KIRWAN. There is more in this than you suspect. It's becoming serious, a matter of a man's conscience and even more.

MRS. KIRWAN. A conscience in a board of guardians ! A harp in a wheelbarrow !

KIRWAN. Fanny, there's bribery going.

MRS. KIRWAN. What ? (*Eagerly*). Money do you mean ?

KIRWAN. I do. Bribery—money—for votes. I had an experience of it last night. I tell you it took a twist out of me.

MRS. KIRWAN. What did ?

KIRWAN. To be offered money.

MRS. KIRWAN. Who offered it ?

KIRWAN. Dr. Power O'Connor. He's becoming afraid of young Diamond. The young fellow has a good taking way with him, and he's scorching round the union on his

bicycle talking to men and winning some of them over.

MRS. KIRWAN. What were you offered ? How much ?

KIRWAN. For God's sake, woman, don't put it that blunt way to me. Its not delicate—not respectful. Dr. Power O'Connor approached me, I must say, very nicely and properly and the money was scarcely mentioned.

MRS. KIRWAN. Will he give you any at all ? What amount ?

KIRWAN. He spoke about the time and money spent by public men on public business and named all the classes that are paid, from members of Parliament down.

MRS. KIRWAN. Just so. What I often said myself.

KIRWAN. It's all a business matter according to him, and one way of recompense is as right as another. We're all in the same boat, the one swim.

MRS. KIRWAN. But did he name a sum or a figure ?

KIRWAN. In the end he made a reference to his cheque book. Then in a sort of what actor fellows call an aside—a little dashed off kind of trifle—he scribbled £25 on a piece of paper in front of me. He never spoke a word. I looked up at him. He raised his eyebrows, and they were as like a note of interrogation as a shell is like an egg. I knew that all I had to do was to wink.

MRS. KIRWAN (*with a great sigh of relief*). £25 will be very welcome coming into this house. My prayers have been heard.

KIRWAN. What are you saying ?

MRS. KIRWAN (*half absently*). They have been answered surely. I will make another novena in thanksgiving.

KIRWAN. Your mind is leaping miles in front of you as usual.

MRS. KIRWAN. I'd be long enough taking down and putting up shutters on the shop windows to mark the days before I'd make £25 clear profit. You'd be long enough buying lambs in the market and grazing them in Glean-na-Greine before you'd make £25 clear profit.

KIRWAN. I took no £25.

MRS. KIRWAN (*suddenly appalled*). What ?

KIRWAN. I was not on the market. I told him I was standing aside.

MRS. KIRWAN. No, no, John. You never said that.

KIRWAN. I did, and I mean to stick to it.

MRS. KIRWAN. My God, you must be mad. It is going against Providence.

KIRWAN. I am going according to my own mind and my own reason.

MRS. KIRWAN. What reason can you have ? It cannot be on account of Maggie Diamond's son ?

KIRWAN. If it came to that, then I will say that Maggie Diamond's son as a doctor is out acres in front of the other numbskull.

MRS. KIRWAN. And because Maggie Diamond's son wants to rise in the world is he to do it at your expense ?

KIRWAN. You are running away with yourself again.

MRS. KIRWAN. Have we no struggle with our shop and bit of land ? Are there no five children to be thought of in this house ? Is Maggie Diamond's son more to you than your own three sons and two daughters ? Is the sixth child that you know is coming not to be thought of ? Am I to have no consideration ?

KIRWAN. For God's sake, woman, don't slap me in the face like that. You know it's wrong.

MRS. KIRWAN. I know it's wrong—wrong for a man to put any other family before his own. The shop isn't doing well, and expenses are climbing up every day. If it is once whispered "Kirwan's is going down" down Kirwan's will go.

KIRWAN. People are saying nothing of the kind.

MRS. KIRWAN. They are saying it, and many of them glad to say it.

KIRWAN. We have as good name as ever we had.

MRS. KIRWAN. Your subscription to the races this year you had to drop by £2. That's noted. The subscription list to the new chapel will be read out in a few weeks. Where will your name stand upon it for comment ?

There are people in a smaller way than us giving £10 to £25. That won't be hum'd and haw'd over, I suppose?

KIRWAN. You only harden me with your talk.

MRS. KIRWAN. For God's sake, John, don't refuse this gift. I implore you to go back to Dr. Power O'Connor and make it up with him.

KIRWAN. I was never bought in my life and I'm not going to be bought now.

MRS. KIRWAN. You don't know what you are doing——

KIRWAN. I've had enough of talk. (MRS. KIRWAN bursts into hysterical tears and KIRWAN brings his fist down on the table.) Get out of my sight. I'll not have that. (His wife dashes out door to house in a temper. KIRWAN sighs and sinks into a chair. MARY comes from shop.)

MARY. Has anything happened?

KIRWAN. Nothing.

MARY. Is it true, John, that bribes are offered for votes in this election?

KIRWAN. We can't believe all we hear. I wish to heaven the whole damn thing was over and done.

MARY. Well, don't worry yourself over it anyhow. I know they will put all the pressure they can on you on account of your position. But I don't see how you can prevent people from doing despicable things even if you tried. Are you going out to the land again to-day?

KIRWAN. Not yet.

MARY. Well, here's your paper. Will I bring your slippers, John?

KIRWAN. Do, Mary.

MARY (bringing him slippers). I made a discovery to-day. Patrick will be good at music, I think. I tried him at the piano and got him to sing a little song.

KIRWAN. I never knew music to be in the Kirwan family—except yourself, Mary.

MARY. Patrick has quite a nice little voice, then, and a very good ear. . . . There's a knock on the counter.

(Exits, door to shop.)

KIRWAN (opening paper and reading headings). "The

Balkan Situation"—(*He looks elsewhere*)—"New York Sensation—Slashed Skirt leads to big riot"—(*He looks elsewhere*)—"Election of Medical Officer—Alleged corrupt practises"—(*He throws down paper in disgust.* DR. LUKE DIAMOND enters from shop. *He is a young man with a well-knit figure, clear cut features, optimistic, energetic in his movements.*)

DIAMOND. Hello, John, taking it easy.

KIRWAN. Having a quiet time, Luke.

DIAMOND. Well, I've finished the campaign, boxed the compass of the Garrymore union, and would you believe me—but you won't.

KIRWAN. What?

DIAMOND. I'm going to win.

KIRWAN. Good man, my congratulations.

DIAMOND. By one vote if you stand out.

KIRWAN. I told you before I'd stand out.

DIAMOND. Thanks, John, I ask no more.

KIRWAN. Sit down. You must have a bag full of news after your travels.

DIAMOND. I had a time of it. Lord, such a rotten job. I would not go through it again for a million. Have a cigarette?

KIRWAN. No, thanks. What way did you find the guardians?

DIAMOND (*as he lights*). Every one of them a problem, a human document. The honest man, the testy man, the fiery man, the dolt, the man that gave me a blessing and the man that drove me away with a curse. A mixture of stupidity and sharpness, guile and simplicity, cupidity and honesty.

KIRWAN. Well, they say variety is charming.

DIAMOND. There was I, because I had graduated in the National University of Ireland in medicine, approaching every man Jack of them with a brave front but a hidden, sickening feeling of mental revolt.

KIRWAN. That's what your books did for you.

DIAMOND. I was like the slave of the past generation

approaching the landlord on gale day with his hat in his hand and his heart in his mouth. I might as well have said "yer honor" to Mike Flaherty, as he forked out the dung from his cow-house, for all the self-respect I was left by the time I had finished.

KIRWAN. It had to be done. Gold itself has to pass through the crucible of fire.

DIAMOND. It *was* an experience. I put my case before one small farmer—fellow with a hungry grey face standing at his half broken-down gate. His wife came out the door in a cloud of smoke. "Ellen," says he to her, "this fine young gentleman has come to get me to give up the five pound I'm proffered for the vote." The wife lifted a spade and came charging down at me with a shout. I had time to jump on the bicycle and "git."

KIRWAN. You were always discreet, Luke.

DIAMOND. A big broad-faced fellow—something of the old school about him—met me in his haggard. "How much are you making it?" he asked. "Not a Rex." said I. "I bring you what I believe are the better abilities and you're a guardian of the poor." He laid his hand on my shoulder and his eyes went deep. "You'll have my vote," he said. "I was degraded yesterday by a certain offer and I've gone around the place since with shame in my heart" I came away humming.

KIRWAN. It's a queer country.

DIAMOND. The spirit of the fight has got into my blood now. I feel lifted above the personal interest. If we are to have a conscience and a public morality in this country, every mean and base thing like bribery has got to be fought and beaten. The man who sells his vote to-day will sell his soul to-morrow. The channels to public life and public positions must be kept open to the best intellects or there can be no progress. If the other spirit prevails it will prey upon the bowels of the nation like a cancer.

KIRWAN. Everyone does not see it that way.

DIAMOND. Well, it's our business to make them see it and to flay them with scorpions if they require it. I used

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often think that it did not matter a curse what happened in a hump of a place like Garrymore. I have changed that view. I know now that if this sort of thing is not knifed where it breaks out it will spread. And now I have a majority—a bare majority—with me.

KIRWAN. I hope you will be able to hold it, Luke. (MARY opens door to shop.)

MARY. Dr. Power O'Connor is looking for you, John. I told him ——— (Dr. Power O'Connor pushes into the room followed by his son. He is an old, well-preserved man, grim, looking as if he had seen a good deal of the world. His son is like him, but degenerate, almost a parody on the father.)

DR. POWER O'CONNOR. It's all right, Mary. (Exit MARY.) Ah, John, glad to see you.

KIRWAN. Come in, gentlemen, come in.

DR. POWER O'CONNOR (looking at DIAMOND over his spectacles, condescendingly). Good-day, sir.

DIAMOND (in like manner). Good-day, sir.

KIRWAN. Take a seat, doctor. (DR. POWER O'CONNOR shakes hands heartily with KIRWAN, who hurries to get him a seat. The two young doctors meet the other side of the room.)

DR. JACK. Hello, doc. How goes it?

DIAMOND. Tearing around. Hope you're feeling fit yourself, doc.?

DR. JACK. Fit? Rats! Haven't been on the links once since this bally racket commenced.

DIAMOND. You're not enjoying the campaign then?

DR. JACK. Don't talk of it! It's like walloping about a rotten bunker with no hope of making a green this side of kingdom-come. As for a drink. (He draws his hand down his throat.) Like a limekiln, doc.

DIAMOND (laughingly clapping the other on the shoulder). Well, I'll be off; I've had my say. Good-day, all. (Exits, door to shop.)

DR. POWER O'CONNOR (wiping his spectacles). Well, well, to be sure! What a bumptious young hopeful, the scion of a great house! Jack, I don't like your familiarity with Diamond.

DR. JACK. Oh, damn it, gov'nor, I can't be a prig. He's qualified, and gave us fellows in college a hell of a pacing all over the course.

KIRWAN. He's clever, certainly.

DR. POWER O'CONNOR. Now, John, don't let ourselves be dazzled by a little tinsel. Let us be straight with each other. We know each other a great many years.

KIRWAN. All our lives, doctor.

DR. POWER O'CONNOR. Do you recollect the first proverb we learned in school, I might say together ? "Never give up the old for the new."

KIRWAN. I thought that very sound.

DR. JACK (*yawning*). Do you two mind if I trot out to the shop to talk with Mary while you're jawing ?

DR. POWER O'CONNOR. Yes, wait for me in the shop. And by-the-bye give this order to Mary from your mother. I had nearly forgotten it. (*He gives a slip of paper to the son.*) Some goods my wife wants up to the house, John. (*Exit JACK, door to shop.*) Things are looking serious. I am sorry to say that the men of your board are not what they ought to be.

KIRWAN. They're a mixed team, I know.

DR. POWER O'CONNOR. There is a lot of cant going about these days, dropped by half-baked socialists like Diamond. If you don't mind, John, we'll talk like man to man, as life-long friends should.

KIRWAN. It is better. And as I told you before, doctor, I'm standing out.

DR. POWER O'CONNOR. Have you fully considered the effect of that John ? I don't want to see you scratched by both parties when the whole thing is over or to listen to sneers at wobblers and striders of the ditch and not be able to defend you. Think at least what a man owes to his wife and family.

KIRWAN. I have my own way for looking after myself.

DR. POWER O'CONNOR. Very well, John. I can respect every man's feelings. Now listen to my case. I am an old man, and my practice is becoming too much for me.

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It has taken me all my life to build it up and I won it through skill and hard work against heavy opposition.

KIRWAN. Everyone in the countryside knows your worth.

DR. POWER O'CONNOR. It is the most natural thing in the world that I should hand down that practice to my son. If I had no such desire would I be a worthy father ?

KIRWAN. You would not.

DR. POWER O'CONNOR. Is the farmer with a grown son willing to see his farm pass into the hands of an outsider when he is no longer himself able to follow the plough ? Is the shopkeeper prepared to hand over his custom to another and his own son standing by ? I think not.

KIRWAN. Admitted.

DR. POWER O'CONNOR. It has cost me more to educate Jack than it costs the farmer or the shopkeeper to educate his son. Jack had expensive tastes and I never denied him anything. Perhaps I was wrong, but there again you will admit that it was a human frailty.

KIRWAN. It was ; every father can understand that.

DR. POWER O'CONNOR. I have now brought Jack where he can follow in my footsteps. With experience and a little hardening in the world he will serve the people as faithfully as I have served them, and do the same honour to his profession. But if I left him at this point I should destroy all that had gone before, sacrifice my whole life's work as far as the natural succession from father to son goes.

KIRWAN. I see your point very well.

DR. POWER O'CONNOR. I would never have retired from the dispensary if I did not feel convinced he should succeed me. I never once dreamt of this son of a herring woman.

KIRWAN. But the dispensary is not so much in itself ?

DR. POWER O'CONNOR. As my private practice grew it became comparatively nothing to me in itself. With Jack it would be different. He will have in-roads on the private practice at the best. This one thing can be

secured to him definitely. If he is rejected publicly for the dispensary is he not branded as an inferior, declared unfit to look after even red-ticket cases? The effect of that on a private practice such as mine would be tremendous and disastrous. I would be criminal, I believe, in the sight of God if I allowed such a thing to come about.

KIRWAN. But what's to be done?

DR. POWER O'CONNOR. Diamond is to be beaten, that's what's to be done. He is young, and has the world before him. He has no title to put his hand on this dispensary. It would simply be a grab. He has got to carve out his own way even as I did. No matter how little he gets to do in this place he will be a prince compared to the life of poverty and semi-starvation in which he has been brought up.

KIRWAN. Well, I'm told he has got the promise of a considerable vote.

DR. POWER O'CONNOR. He has, from people who are always prepared to upset an existing state of affairs, but who would brain the man that tried the same thing on themselves. To throw society into a state of chaos is the blind gospel of such men. I tell you, Kirwan, old as I am, I feel something more than a personal element in this fight. I feel that I can do a man's part in the struggle for a public stability in this country, a sense of security in its public life and the creation of a moral discipline in its people. We have got to kill the spirit that is plucking at the vitals of our public institutions by this immoral and deadly subdued rage that is continually seeking the overthrow of established and even divine authority. That spirit has got to be rigorously suppressed.

KIRWAN. If these men are what you say they are, how are you to fight them?

DR. POWER O'CONNOR. They are to be fought with the only weapons that they respect. I'm going to come down to their own level, whatever violence it may do to my private feelings. *Every time my hand falls from this forth in this fight it will come down with the weight of gold.*

KIRWAN. I can see that there will be a storm in Garrymore.

DR. POWER O'CONNOR. That's my case, and I want your vote.

KIRWAN. It would be no good to you, doctor. Diamond has got a majority of one, and I believe he can count on his men.

DR. POWER O'CONNOR. He cannot count on his men. He had a majority of one this morning, but he has it no longer. One of his men—we won't mention names—has, with a little persuasion, now come over to my side.

KIRWAN. Then it will result in a tie.

DR. POWER O'CONNOR. I hope not, John (*going to him*). Don't you see how important it is for you to vote for Jack? You know the influence you have as chairman of the board. With that and the deciding vote you simply hold the election in the hollow of your hand.

KIRWAN. I could not think of doing that, doctor. The responsibility is too great.

DR. POWER O'CONNOR (*taking out his cheque book and scribbling on it with a fountain pen while he speaks*). John, I have given you my mind unreservedly—in a way I would not give it even to my own family. I do not think of you but as one apart from the other guardians. We grew up, I might say, boys together. Anything that passes between us will go with the impulse of friendship and let no lesser thought defile it. It is to be given and accepted as a token of friendship and goodwill and as nothing else. (*He leaves cheque on the table.*)

KIRWAN. I could not think of taking that, doctor. I know it is a cheque.

DR. POWER O'CONNOR. John, never say you cannot think. The man who is afraid to think is the worst kind of traitor—a traitor to himself, (*Laughing.*) Now that's good fatherly advice, and I'll say good-bye.

KIRWAN. Wait a moment, doctor. *(He wipes his forehead with his handkerchief.)*

DR. POWER O'CONNOR. We can say no more. Jack is waiting for me. He may be making love to Mary in the shop. If they ran away together on us wouldn't it be a nice how-do-you-do. Good-bye, John.

KIRWAN. Doctor, I can't —

DR. POWER O'CONNOR. Are you not going to shake hands with me? Shake as a man—and a friend. *(He shakes KIRWAN's hand and bustles into shop. KIRWAN takes some steps toward the closed door and stops. He turns back, his eyes on the cheque on the table for some moments. He looks anxiously at door leading to house, then tip-toes to mantelpiece from which he takes a box of matches. DR. JACK POWER O'CONNOR opens door to shop, his head alone showing.)*

DR JACK. I'm off, Kirwan, old cock. The gov'nor says I must say good-bye to you, but I'm sick of the whole rotten show. Anyhow, tol-lol *(Exits)*

KIRWAN. Good-bye. *(He goes to table, looks at door to house, strikes a match. Then takes up cheque. He is about to put the light to the cheque when the handle of the door to house turns. He drops match hurriedly and goes to mantelpiece on which he leaves cheque as his wife enters, applying a handkerchief to her eyes.)*

MRS. KIRWAN. Did I hear Dr. Power O'Connor's voice?

KIRWAN. You could have.

MRS. KIRWAN. I suppose you drove him out?

KIRWAN. I did.

MRS. KIRWAN. Well, you've ruined us.

KIRWAN. Don't be always making a mountain out of a molehill.

MRS. KIRWAN *(sitting down)*. I want to talk to you. Did you notice that I have gone to six o'clock Mass for a year without a break?

KIRWAN. I believe I did.

MRS. KIRWAN. It was because I was too shabby to be seen at late Mass.

KIRWAN. Vanity and religion ; they go well together.

MRS. KIRWAN. It was not through vanity, but because people would take my measure and make shrewd guesses. I put the servant away, and your sister and myself have been doing the work between us. Mary is getting as shabby as I am. It's noted that the shelves in the shop are emptying.

KIRWAN. It's not. I would scarcely notice it myself.

MRS. KIRWAN. Other people are sharper than you. They are putting two and two together. Our credit will go with our shrinking business. I told you about the subscription list.

KIRWAN. I'll be selling a few sheep on Thursday, and you can increase the contribution.

MRS. KIRWAN. The sheep are as good as sold already.

KIRWAN. What do you mean, woman ?

MRS. KIRWAN. You know that big account of Waverley & Humphreys that I had to pay their traveller three months ago ?

KIRWAN. Well ?

MRS. KIRWAN. How do you think I paid that ?

KIRWAN. You told me yourself—out of the shop receipts.

MRS. KIRWAN. I lied to you—lied to you because Mary persuaded me not to worry you. I had only a small part of the money to pay the traveller. He refused it and took alarm when he saw the business was shakey. They threatened to close us up. I was driven into a corner, frightened.

KIRWAN. My God, why did you not tell me.

MRS. KIRWAN. I was afraid, and Mary influenced me. I went to Martin Claffey —

KIRWAN. Martin Claffey, the gombeen man ?

MRS. KIRWAN. I had nowhere else to go. I borrowed the money from him for three months.

KIRWAN. Good God ! How much did you borrow ?

MRS. KIRWAN. £85. The debt is due for some weeks, and I had several demands from him. He is threatening

me, and I have only £10 to meet him. You know as well as I do what he is.

KIRWAN. Who went security for you ?

MRS. KIRWAN. Nobody. The security was the land and the sheep. He would not look at the shop—another good sign.

KIRWAN. You could not give him the stock and land as security. They are mine.

MRS. KIRWAN. You forget something. You forget that when we were in trouble three years ago—when you were threatened with bankruptcy—you assigned the land and stock over to me for safety. I had to put that deed of assignment before Claffey before he'd move. He was satisfied that I was the legal owner, and he has my I.O.U.

KIRWAN. How could you practise such deception upon me ? We're in the claws of that vulture now.

MRS. KIRWAN. I was driven to it. You were too much taken up with public business to have much of a grip on your private affairs. And besides you could do nothing. (*Enter MARY from shop.*)

MARY. Martin Claffey is in the shop, John. He says he wants to see you urgently.

KIRWAN. My God ! . . . I wont see him. . . . Tell him I will call up to see him privately—in the dusk—to-night.

MRS. KIRWAN. Was he angry, Mary ?

MARY. Oh, no ; very nice. (*Exits.*)

MRS. KIRWAN. Claffey will come down on us now. Except you might get friends to help you.

KIRWAN. What friends have I ? Where am I to turn ? I could only make things worse than they are.

MRS. KIRWAN. Then go to Dr. Power O'Connor. The £25 will keep Claffey quiet for a bit. (*With bitterness.*) What would come to you as a gift you must now go crawling to beg as a favour. It's a proper judgment upon you.

KIRWAN. No ; I am saved that last humiliation, that's

woise than bitterness. (*He goes to mantelpiece, takes cheque and looks at it.*) Good Lord !

MRS. KIRWAN. What is wrong now ?

KIRWAN. Dr. Power O'Connor is intimate with Martin Claffey, is he not ?

MRS. KIRWAN. They are hand and glove.

KIRWAN. Then he must have told him.—This cheque——

MRS. KIRWAN. A cheque ? From whom ?

KIRWAN. Dr. Power O'Connor.

MRS. KIRWAN. For the £25 ?

KIRWAN. No ; my market value has gone up ; he told me I hold the election in the hollow of my hand. This is a cheque for £80. He must have known my difficulties better than I did myself.

MRS. KIRWAN. John ! We are saved ! The children are saved !

KIRWAN. The children ! . . . I have only to endorse it and the land and stock are redeemed.

MRS. KIRWAN. Thank God, thank God !

KIRWAN. I never thought I should be faced with such a temptation.

MRS. KIRWAN. Temptation ! Don't go on talking like that again. For God's sake endorse the cheque at once. (*She brings ink, pen and paper to table from side-board.*) There are rich farmers taking money in the country. It means nothing to Dr. Power O'Connor. What are a couple of hundred pounds to him ? He will get it all back a hundredfold.

KIRWAN. I won't deceive myself. If I do this I will be doing a thing I dare not do in the sight of my fellow-man. If it were known I would be open to legal prosecution and disgraced in my public life.

MRS. KIRWAN. Don't go on talking that way. You are stubborn and will plunge us all into misery again. For my sake, for Mary's sake, for the sake of your helpless innocent children—don't ruin us all. (*KIRWAN goes slowly to the table, pausing half way to it.*) There is the

pen and ink, John. (*He sits at table. MRS. DIAMOND comes quietly from shop.*)

MRS. DIAMOND. Mr. Kirwan !

KIRWAN (*starting, turning slowly to her.*) Yes——yes.

MRS. DIAMOND. I only come to thank you. Luke has told me the splendid news. You don't know all the good you have done. (*Exits. KIRWAN is seen slowly endorsing cheque, his wife bending over his shoulder as the curtain falls.*)

CURTAIN.

ACT II

SCENE.—*The boardroom of the Garrymore union. A long table covered with green baize down centre of room. Writing materials upon it. At head of table there is a raised desk at which the chairman, JOHN KIRWAN, is seated. To his right, facing the audience, is the clerk's chair, books and documents in front of it. The clerk, TOOMEY, is standing attentively over KIRWAN blotting his signature as he signs some sheets. A small table stands away by background at which two reporters are seated. Maps and charts hang on the wall. Some half dozen members are in the room. Two stand chatting at end of the table. A door to right leads to clerk's room. From this there is a murmur of voices with an occasional laugh.*

KIRWAN. Does that dispose of the pay sheets, Mr. Toomey?

CLERK. Just two more, sir. (KIRWAN signs them. Three members come from CLERK'S room and take their seats at the table.)

1ST GUARDIAN. Have you disposed of the routine, Mr. Chairman?

KIRWAN. I think this finishes us.

2ND GUARDIAN. We had better hurry up.

KIRWAN. Now, gentlemen, the last item on the agenda.

CLERK. The election of medical officer to the Garrymore dispensary district.

1ST GUARDIAN. That's what we're waiting for.

2ND GUARDIAN. Now we'll have all the backwoods men in. Call them Mr. Toomey.

CLERK (going to door). Now gentlemen the election of doctor. (A squad of members come pushing into the room, making for the chairs. A few are left standing. Some are, from their style of dress, semi-professional, others small

farmers, others with riding breeches and leggings. In the discussion the voices range from basso to a nasal falsetto. The debate is practically left to four members.)

KIRWAN. Now, gentlemen, order please. We must proceed to business. *(There is some silence.)*

CLERK. Is it necessary to read the advertisement inviting candidates for the position? *(Several voices, "Not at all"—"We have it off by heart"—"Peg away.")*

1ST GUARDIAN. There are several gentlemen with business to attend to anxious to get away.

2ND GUARDIAN. We didn't see some of their faces since the last job was on *(Cries of "Oh" and "Withdraw.")* But they are better paid for their time to-day than ever they were in their lives before. *(More protests.)* If the cap does not fit any man he need not wear it.

4TH GUARDIAN. I protest on a point of order, Mr. Chairman.

KIRWAN. I will ask the members of the board to allow the business to proceed quietly.

3RD GUARDIAN. There is no necessity for heat.

1ST GUARDIAN. People should not be insulted.

2ND GUARDIAN. We all know you are a very virtuous man yourself, Mike, a white angel dropped down from heaven by accident. *(There is much laughter and a voice, "That's a queer one for Mike.")*

KIRWAN. Order, order.

4TH GUARDIAN *(jumping to his feet)*. I protest. I will ask the chairman —

KIRWAN *(with authority)*. Sit down, sir. *(The other collapses.)* Now, Mr. Toomey. *(There is silence.)*

CLERK *(with letters in his hand)*. There are only two applications for the position—one from Doctor John Cumberland Power O'Connor, the other from Doctor Luke Diamond. The applications are both formal—shall I read them? *(Voices, "Not at all"—"We can guess what they say"—"Take them as read.")*

CLERK. Both candidates submit their qualifications and

diplomas. Perhaps I should read them ? (*Voices, "No, no"—and "Yes, yes."*)

4TH GUARDIAN. I protest. What in the name of God Almighty do we know about diplomas ?

1ST GUARDIAN. Sending letters half Latin and half Greek to the like of us !

4TH GUARDIAN. Diplomas are not going to influence the members of this board. We're able to think for ourselves, aye, and act for ourselves, too. Is that right, gentlemen ? (*Cries of, "Right" and "Bosh."*)

1ST GUARDIAN. And besides, we've all made up our minds, so there's no good in talk.

2ND GUARDIAN. Some of the gentlemen in this historic room made up their minds with their accounts—a system of double entry. (*Renewed protests : "More hitting below the belt." "Withdraw." "We'll be here all day."*)

KIRWAN (*rapping the table*). We shall now proceed with the election.

1ST GUARDIAN. Before doing so, might we not have the candidates in the room—as an act of courtesy. They are both outside in the clerk's room.

3RD GUARDIAN. And they are both very good-looking young men. It's a pity we haven't a few lady guardians to admire them.

2ND GUARDIAN. Don't you think we are bad enough without piling on the agony ?

4TH GUARDIAN. Call in the candidates——We're not afraid of anything we do here.

2ND GUARDIAN. Except you are surcharged.

KIRWAN. Very well. Summon the candidates, Mr. Toomey. (*TOOMEY goes to room and is followed back by DR. JACK POWER O'CONNOR and DR. DIAMOND. They pass down to two chairs at other end of room from the chairman. Members clap them on the backs or shake hands as they pass along.*)

KIRWAN. Now, gentlemen, I am prepared to receive any proposition you are disposed to make. (*1ST GUARDIAN and two others spring to their feet. There are cries of*

“*Morrissey.*”) Mr. Morrissey, gentlemen. (*The others subside.*)

1ST GUARDIAN (*coughing, jerking his coat about his shoulders, striking an oratorical attitude.*) It is my proud privilege on this auspicious occasion, Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, to rise to propose that Dr. John Cumberland Power O'Connor be appointed to the medical officership of the Garrymore dispensary district. I do so for certain reasons.

2ND GUARDIAN. Very powerful ones, too. (*Some protests.*)

1ST GUARDIAN. I propose him because he belongs to one of the most highly respected and best esteemed families in this the virgin county, and of his pedigree I need only say that it is even longer than his name. (*Laughter, in which the speaker himself leads.*) But, after all, gentlemen, we must be serious. We are a deliberative body charged with functions that can only belong to men of integrity and holding sacred a public trust. It is our privilege to hold unsullied and pass on without a stain to our children the escutcheon of this, I suppose, the noblest union within the four seas of Ireland. (*A voice, “Good man, Mike.”*) I, as a guardian of God's poor, could not sleep easy in my bed at night if I did not think deep down in the inmost recesses of my heart and soul that I had done on this occasion what in me lies for the humblest and most helpless of our people. I stand here before you to-day to make this solemn proposition because —

2ND GUARDIAN. Because your paw has been well greased. (*Protests.*)

KIRWAN. I will ask Mr. Finnegan not to make these offensive observations.

1ST GUARDIAN (*resuming with less enthusiasm*). I don't mind what the fiery Finnegan says. It passes from me like water off a duck's back. My interest in God's poor is well known. I have slaved for them here through good and evil repute. My record as a nationalist is not a matter of yesterday or to-day. I think you will all hold with me

that I do not boast when I say that it is engraven in the annals of our beloved country.

2ND GUARDIAN. This one will be engraven in letters of gold. (*Protests.*)

1ST GUARDIAN (*with still less energy*). I will not keep you any longer, gentlemen. I will leave to your judgment the proposition I have made. I feel it is the proudest moment of my life to move the election of the son of our old, esteemed and revered officer who has retired with honours thick upon a head that has grown grey in our service. If you elect his son—a real chip of the old block—you will be doing a glorious day's work for God's blessed poor, whom we all ardently love. (*Applause.*)

A GUARDIAN (*speaking very nervously and in a thin piping voice*). I beg to, ah—I beg to second—this, ah, motion—proposed, ah, so ably by Mr. Morrisey—and I, ah, know that it will—that it will pass.

2ND GUARDIAN. That speech wasn't worth the money paid for it. (*Protests.*)

4TH GUARDIAN. I protest. These remarks can only be taken one way. They are insinuations that men on this board have sold their votes. That is as disgraceful a charge against as honest and God-fearing a body of men as ever—as ever —

1ST GUARDIAN (*coming to the rescue with a flourish*). As ever sweetened the sod of holy Ireland. (*Much approval and a voice, "It takes Morrisey."*)

4TH GUARDIAN. What is the outside public to think of these attacks when they are read in the Press? (*A voice, "They won't."*) I will ask our friends the Pressmen—who, I must say, always do their work discreetly—(*A voice, "Question."*) to take no notice of such base charges.

2ND GUARDIAN. Muzzling the Press! (*A reporter stretches out his legs, stares up at ceiling and yawns.*)

KIRWAN. Any other proposition?

3RD GUARDIAN. Might I make the request that the board should be instructed as to the respective qualifications of the candidates? (*Cries of "No" and "Yes."*)

KIRWAN. That question has been already raised and decided. Both candidates are, I believe, qualified for the position. (*A voice, "That's good enough."*)

3RD GUARDIAN. If we are to go on the reasonable principle that the best man should get this and every other public position in the gift of the board we should have the qualifications before us and understood. Otherwise we are groping in the dark. (*Voices, "Rot" and "Go on with the business."*)

KIRWAN. I am open to receive any other propositions that are in order.

2ND GUARDIAN. I propose the election of Dr. Luke Diamond. Every man of you knows that he is the better candidate—that there is absolutely no comparison between the two. You know that without any documentary evidence. You know that he is the cleverest student that ever came from this part of the country. You saw where he took first place in honours in every degree in the University. You are supposed to be a democratic board. You passed thundering resolutions about educational equality—you wept tears—crocodile tears I fear—over the educational handicap suffered by the poor man's son. Here is the brilliant son of a poor woman. The very men that made speeches about national university education come here to-day to down him, and they come to do it at a price. They come to crush the first evidence of character springing from among themselves. I won't blaspheme by drawing down God's poor while Judas-like I betray them—as has been done here to-day. (*Voices, "Withdraw," and "Disgraceful."*) I won't withdraw, and I tell some of the smug saints and scholars I see around me that if they draw me any further I'll leave them standing stark naked in their hypocrisy before the public. (*The others are subdued by the attack of the speaker.*) When men talk about patriotism and then sell their votes they are the gets of that bribery and corruption which put this country upon the cross, crucified for over a hundred years. The men that sell the interests of the poor will

breed a generation that will sell its country and won't have the courage of a Castlereagh to cut their lousey throats.

KIRWAN (*rising, pallid and a little hysterical*). I can't allow this to go on. I won't have it. I can't bear it. It's not right. (*Cries of, "Quite correct," "Shut him up," "Fair play," "Free speech."*)

2ND GUARDIAN. Am I to be muzzled like the Press?

KIRWAN. No one wants to muzzle you. But you are too extreme. Be more moderate.

2ND GUARDIAN. My methods must shape themselves according to my mind.

1ST GUARDIAN. Don't heed him. Let him have a go at me. I've a good hide.

2ND GUARDIAN (*turning to him with an accusing finger of scorn*). Very well. That humbug, Morrissey, has gone through thirty years of rotten transactions such as this with his piety and his patriotism for his magic passport. It has been the "Open Sesame" of his public life, as valuable to him in Garrymore as the secret of the Forty Thieves was valuable to Ali Baba in Bagdad. His career has been a prolonged prostitution of public life. He has been the Tartuffe of every mean thing done in this board, a blight upon decency, a scourge to the poor. I believe he has a conviction simmering somewhere at the back of his criminal head that he will, when the time comes, be able to out-manœuvre the final Judgment and cheat the devil. There he sits, twelve stone of moral corruption, beaming and cheerful, his lips ready to slobber about God's poor while he fingers in his greasy pocket the gold that bought him.

4TH GUARDIAN. I protest. Are we to sit dumb while attacks like this are made?

1ST GUARDIAN. Let him welt away, Tom. He's only a flapper.

2ND GUARDIAN. A defender of God's poor, indeed! I remember when a girl, a sinner, was led, according to custom, into this room because she sought the shelter of

the workhouse in her distress. She was brought here to be stared at and smirked at in her shame by a board of men. It is a hateful system. But the man to cast the first stone, brutal enough to stand up and badger the unfortunate girl into hysterics, was Morrisey, because, I suppose, he is without sin.

1ST GUARDIAN. That I did as a Christian man and in discharge of a painful public duty.

2ND GUARDIAN. You did it as a blind. The same girl stated afterwards on her death-bed that her seducer and the father of her bastard was that same guardian of the poor, Morrisey. (*Several members spring to their feet. Cries of, "This is too much," "We won't stand it," "It's the truth," "Let Morrisey defend himself."*)

KIRWAN (*rapping the table*). I have to say that if these scenes continue I must adjourn the board (*There is quiet.*)

4TH GUARDIAN. I protest. Is Mr. Morrisey not to be allowed to defend himself?

1ST GUARDIAN (*quite unmoved, rising lazily and sauntering out of room*). Defend myself against a pack of lies and fairy tales, is it? Don't be bothering me! (*As he passes*

2ND GUARDIAN). Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves. . . . I'm going out for a smoke. (*Exits, amid a low murmur.*)

2ND GUARDIAN. That is all I have to say. It is sufficient to prick the consciences of the voteens and humbugs in the room—if they have any conscience. I propose Dr. Luke Diamond for the position.

3RD GUARDIAN. I beg to second it. I do so because I believe he has the better qualifications, though I regret that we have not the evidence of the fact laid in a business-like way before us.

KIRWAN. Any other proposition? (*There is no response*)

CLERK. Is the matter to go to a poll?

KIRWAN (*wiping perspiration from his forehead*). I suppose so. Call the poll. (*A voice, "a show of hands will do."*) Very well, I'll take a show of hands. All those in favour of the motion that Dr. John Cumberland

The Bribe

Power O'Connor be elected to the position of medical officer of the Garrymore dispensary district will please raise up their hands. (*Ten hands are raised in various parts of the room. MORRISSEY comes to door and stands there smoking with his hand raised. The CLERK counts the hands.*)

CLERK. Ten, I think. Is that right ?

KIRWAN. Yes, I make it ten, too. (*A voice "Evens on the field."*) All those who are against the motion will now please raise their hands. (*Ten hands are raised in various parts of room.*)

CLERK. Ten. I think I am correct. (*A voice, "Ten to ten. A dead heat."*)

2ND GUARDIAN. Good—a tie! Ten men that were not to be bought.

KIRWAN. I wont allow any more of this. How dare you, sir! Every man has the same freedom as you to make his choice.

2ND GUARDIAN. I admit that at once and I say that from what I know of the chairman's conduct here and from what I know of his private life I believe he is not to be bought by any man or any interest. (*General approval.*)

KIRWAN. Thank you. Do the movers of the motion press for a roll call and a vote ?

1ST GUARDIAN. No. We are satisfied.

KIRWAN. Very well.

3RD GUARDIAN. Then I presume you declare the motion lost ? What are we to do now, Mr. Toomey ?

CLERK. You can issue fresh advertisements for candidates for this day month. (*A voice, "We've only wasted our time and our wind."*) That is the usual procedure, sir.

KIRWAN. Not so fast, Mr. Toomey. (*The CLERK sits down at once.*)

CLERK. I beg pardon, sir.

KIRWAN. The matter must proceed orderly. I have merely taken the poll on the method agreed upon. I have not declared the motion lost or put it from the chair.

CLERK. But there is a tie, sir. Therefore the motion—

KIRWAN. I will ask you to sit down, sir. (TOOMEY pops down again.)

CLERK. I am sorry, sir.

1ST GUARDIAN. The Chairman hasn't voted yet. What about his vote? It all hangs on that. (*Several members, "Aye, what about the Chairman's vote?" There is silence.*)

KIRWAN. *steadies himself at desk as he rises.*

KIRWAN (*raising his hand*) I give my vote to Doctor John Power O'Connor —

DR. DIAMOND (*rising in surprise*). I say, John—is this not some mistake? (*Several guardians turn to him in anger. Voices, "Sit down, Doctor Diamond." "Don't dare to interfere." He sits down.*)

KIRWAN. I give my vote—the deciding vote—to Dr. John Power O'Connor and declare him duly elected to the position. (*Some murmurs and applause. KIRWAN sits back in his chair, mopping his forehead.*)

1ST GUARDIAN. Good man, Mr. Chairman. We've carried the day.

2ND GUARDIAN. Morrissey comes out on top once more.

1ST GUARDIAN. Aye, and I'll double you up at the next election, Finnegan. I'll hammer hell out of you at the polls.

KIRWAN. Order, order! (*Cries for a speech from the successful candidate. DR. JACK POWER O'CONNOR rises.*)

DR. POWER O'CONNOR. I need scarcely say that I am obliged to you for electing me to the position unanimously. (*Laughter, and a voice, "Not unanimously. By the skin of your teeth."*) I beg pardon. No, of course not unanimously. My bally mistake. But it's the same thing isn't it? I'm thankful to you all, but I'm sorry for my friend Diamond. (*His supporters applaud enthusiastically.*)

KIRWAN. I now declare that the board stands adjourned until this day week. (*The members all made ready to go.*)

DR. POWER O'CONNOR. I say, all you fellows, the gov'nor is expecting you at the house. He's got some

stuff ready. (*A voice, "And we're all ready for the stuff." They troop out. The two doctors bring up the rere. DIAMOND pauses when he hears KIRWAN, who remains writing at desk. They are left alone in the room.*)

DIAMOND. I thought, John——

KIRWAN (*continuing his writing*). Well, what did you think?

DIAMOND. That you were to stand aside.

KIRWAN. I changed my mind.

DIAMOND. Is that all?

KIRWAN (*looking up*). What do you mean, sir?

DIAMOND. You did not change anything else?

KIRWAN. You are offensive.

DIAMOND. I am frank.

KIRWAN. You had better be careful. You are not privileged to say the things that Finnegan took advantage of his position to say. The law can deal with that sort of thing.

DIAMOND. The law can be invoked for many things. If I had the money I could have this election quashed. Men have been bribed.

KIRWAN. Do you mean to insinuate, sir, that I have been bribed?

DIAMOND. I am glad to say that I honestly do not believe you have sold your public trust.

KIRWAN. Then how dare you attack me? You are pettish because you have been beaten.

DIAMOND. I have been beaten because I was too poor to bribe.

KIRWAN. What a confession that is. Too poor to bribe! As much as to say that if you had the money you, too, would bribe.

DIAMOND. No man knows whether he is strong enough to resist until he is tempted. I have only my belief that I should cut my head off before I would go out to buy any man's public honour.

KIRWAN. Noble sentiments—but still only sentiments.

DIAMOND. There is no element of sentiment in this. I

never saw less sentiment on either side than I witnessed in this room to-day. It was all harsh, crude and brutal. It is not a question of sentiment, but of public morality, of conscience.

KIRWAN. I did not come here to be lectured by a beaten candidate.

DIAMOND. I do not mean to hurt your feelings. (*A pauper attendant comes in, gathering up blotting pads and papers from table.*)

PAUPER (*as he bustles about*). Guardians is queer.

DIAMOND. I am sorry, John. . . . I apologise. (*He goes out. KIRWAN leans back in chair.*)

PAUPER. Mr. Kirwan, young Dr. Power O'Connor is looking for you. His father is giving a spread to the guardians. He wants you.

KIRWAN (*in a hollow voice*). I'm no going.

PAUPER (*going on with his work, putting chairs in order*). I met Mr. Morrissey and I coming up the stairs. "What has a hearty fellow like you in the house?" says he to me. "I couldn't get on outside," says I. "You couldn't get on outside," says he, "because you were too great of a snipe and a swindler." "I never wronged any man yet," says I. "I'm a pauper surely," says I, "and I'll die behind the walls of the Garrymore union, but I'll die honest" . . . I said that to Mike Morrissey . . . (*as he shuffles out with blotting pads and papers*) . . . Ah, guardians is very queer, so they are. (*KIRWAN sits shrunken back in his chair.*)

(CURTAIN.)

ACT III

Same Scene as Act I., two months later. It is evening and dim in the room. MARY KIRWAN is sitting by the fire. NURSE COONEY comes from door to house and takes some soda-water from a syphon on the sideboard.

MARY. Has she wakened, Mrs. Cooney ?

NURSE. Yes, just now.

MARY. No change ?

NURSE. Her sleep has been very broken. (*Exits to house. DR. DIAMOND comes from shop.*)

DIAMOND. The little girl in the shop told me I should find you here, Mary. (*He stands beside her chair, looking down at her.*) All alone, dreaming by the fire ?

MARY. I like this quiet hour in the evening, Luke. Won't you sit down ?

DIAMOND. Thanks. How is Mrs. Kirwan ?

MARY. There has been no change. The nurse is with her now.

DIAMOND. Mrs. Cooney you've had, I suppose ?

MARY. Yes, and as she asked for a doctor, we sent for Dr. Jack Power O'Connor.

DIAMOND. This will be another feather in his cap.

MARY. Fanny does not like him. She was irritable and asking for his father, the old man, these past two days. But the old doctor is himself ill and unable to leave the house.

DIAMOND. That fight over the dispensary took it out of him. But he hammered me all right.

MARY. John is moody and short in his manner ever since.

DIAMOND. He cuts me dead. One would fancy I did him some injury instead of he having voted against me.

MARY. He won't speak of the affair at all.

DIAMOND. I could never understand John's action ; he promised to stand aside, and I know he was not bought like so many others.

MARY. Luke, the more of the world I see the more do I understand the danger of judging people by acts that we only half understand.

DIAMOND. Your thoughts always run in the charitable direction, Mary.

MARY. I think life would be sweeter if we were all less fond of putting up high standards of righteousness in order to justify our low opinions of our fellow-creatures.

DIAMOND. That is so very like you, Mary. However, I'm not going to bother my head about the thing any more. I've got something else to think about.

MARY. Your private practice ?

DIAMOND. Private practice ! Don't speak of it. No such thing exists. I'm finished with this place.

MARY. What !

DIAMOND. Yes. That is what I came to tell you, Mary. I'm off to Australia in two days. (*There is dead silence for a little, both remaining still, DIAMOND stooped forward in his chair, his head bent*)

MARY (*in a low voice*). Off to Australia ! And in two days ! Oh, Luke !

DIAMOND. I can do nothing here. I have made my wretched little splash. I want completely new ground, a different environment, a life that will be fresher to me, work among a people who will not have the prejudices that confront me here.

MARY. But your mother ?

DIAMOND. Poor mother ! She will be all alone now.

MARY. That seems to be the portion—the tragedy—of so many women.

DIAMOND. But mother is made of splendid stuff. She encourages me to go.

MARY. I can understand what that encouragement costs her.

DIAMOND. She does not wish to see me become a wastrel, sinking into the stagnant life of this place.

MARY. Going away! It sounds so strange.

DIAMOND. You are one of the few that stood by me loyally in this business, Mary. I know how you strove for me in your own way. I can never forget that to you.

MARY. What else should I have done?

DIAMOND. That is true, too. I think we always understood each other very well, Mary. I owe a great deal to you.

MARY. What on earth could you owe to me?

DIAMOND. I can remember the talks we had, the views you held, the ideas we exchanged, the books we read and discussed, the quiet wisdom you gave me. *You* educated me, Mary.

MARY. Nonsense, Luke. You had schools and colleges and professors and opportunities that were far above me as the stars.

DIAMOND. I know. These were all a discipline and a necessity. But they were all a system, machined, with no human element. It was the sympathy, the elemental human touch, sometimes the quaintness of your views that warmed my imagination—my ambition if you like—bringing into life a colour and giving thoughts a reality. Mary, I know now that all that came from some inherent charm in your own personality.

MARY. I could laugh at you, Luke—if you were not going away.

DIAMOND. It sounds an absurd thing to say, but if we were matched in years, if you were of my time or I of your time—I would ask you to come away with me. (MARY laughs.) Don't laugh at me, Mary. I mean it.

MARY. You mean it. (*Her laugh becomes hysterical. She rises.*)

DIAMOND. Why—what is the matter?

MARY. Nothing—nothing. (*She moves away from him to other side of table.*)

DIAMOND. I have not hurt you by what I have said?

MARY. Not hurt me—no. (*She turns to him speaking with low quick passion.*) You have done something more.

You have earthed up with one push the thing that I would fight out of my life, that I would cheat my thoughts of if I could.

DIAMOND. You were always a sensitive woman, I know, but——

MARY. Is there anything more bitter than the sense of age in one such as I? Life sets up no golden bridge between age and youth. And yet the haunting spell remains—the craving when one is cheated of something in youth to get back to it—while the growing spectre of age makes of one the greatest mockery that life knows.

DIAMOND. Mary—I did not mean——

MARY. Your words have stirred up the heart hunger in me, but have no regrets. I am glad now you are going.

DIAMOND. Surely not that?

MARY. I am glad also that you spoke. I have nothing to look to but a life one string of memories, a rosary of faint prayers. Your words won't rankle—they will only mark a decade. I will always remember you as you spoke and as you looked—young, hopeful, purposeful, eager, with the spell of the wanderlust upon you.

DIAMOND. You are high-strung, nervous. We have all to travel the same road in life.

MARY. Let us speak no more of it. The little revolt has already spent itself, I know what I am . . . a woman conscious of her age, standing empty-handed with none of the gifts from life that count with a woman.

DIAMOND. I will always hate myself for having caused you pain of mind.

MARY (*going to him*). Not so, Luke. You will have your own struggles and your own pains. (*Leaving a hand on his shoulder.*) God prosper you in your new life. (*The nurse comes from door to house.*)

NURSE. The doctor to call to-day, Miss Kirwan?

MARY. Yes, certainly. Fanny is no worse, is she?

NURSE. Well—no—but I thought I would remind you.

MARY. Very well. (*Exit NURSE.*) Dr. Power O'Connor

should have called earlier to-day. (MRS. DIAMOND *enters from shop.*)

MRS. DIAMOND. I came for you, Luke. Your cousins in the country want you to spend the night with them. The car is waiting for you.

DIAMOND. I suppose I must obey. I will see you again before I go, Mary.

MARY. Yes, do, Luke. (*Exit DIAMOND.*)

MRS. DIAMOND. He told you he was going ?

MARY. Yes.

MRS. DIAMOND. You are the only one outside the family he told. (KIRWAN *comes from house.*)

KIRWAN. Mary, those children are a pack of noisy rascals. I was trying to pacify them in the low room and I had to give it up. Why is the house in darkness ?

MARY. I will light the lamp. (*She lights lamp.*)

KIRWAN. Oh, good evening, Mrs. Diamond. I did not recognise you in the dusk.

MRS. DIAMOND. Mrs. Kirwan is better I hope ?

KIRWAN. As well as could be expected.

MARY. Mrs. Cooney was inquiring about the doctor.

KIRWAN. And why is he not here ?

MARY. I don't know. (NURSE *enters.*)

NURSE. Miss Kirwan, have you sent for the doctor ?

MARY. I am sending now.

KIRWAN. There is nothing to cause anxiety, is there ?

NURSE. Mrs. Kirwan is very nervous—inclined to be hysterical. She says now that she will not have young Dr. Power O'Connor to see her again.

KIRWAN. I will go to her. I might soothe her. (*Exits with NURSE.*)

MARY. God help poor Fanny.

MRS. DIAMOND. She does not want the doctor that her husband set over the poor.

MARY. She was accustomed to the old man. (*Enter KIRWAN.*)

KIRWAN. She won't even listen to me. What about Dr. Canovan ? Is he to be had ?

MRS. DIAMOND. No ; he has gone away on sick leave.

KIRWAN. How lucky ! This is the sort of thing that maddens me.

MARY. I wonder ought I send for young Power O'Connor ?

KIRWAN. I must say I have no great fancy for him myself coming into the house. (*Enter NURSE*)

NURSE. I want some brandy. (*She takes some at side-board.*) I think you had better send for the doctor at once (*Exits.*)

KIRWAN. This is a nice state of affairs. (JACK POWER O'CONNOR *enters from shop with bag.*)

DR. POWER O'CONNOR. Well, how are we ?

KIRWAN. The nurse was just inquiring for you, doctor.

DR. POWER O'CONNOR. Sorry I wasn't here sooner, then. I hope nothing has happened ?

KIRWAN. No.

DR. POWER O'CONNOR. I'd better see the patient at once.

KIRWAN. A moment, doctor. I will just drop in to tell her you have come. You don't mind ?

DR. POWER O'CONNOR. My dear old chap, I mind nothing. (*Exit KIRWAN.*) How is Luke, Mrs. Diamond ?

MRS. DIAMOND. Very well, indeed.

DR. POWER O'CONNOR. He's making himself mighty scarce on the links.

MARY. Tastes differ, Dr. Jack.

DR. POWER O'CONNOR. I'm having a bally awful time since the gov'nor got knocked up.

MRS. DIAMOND. That's too bad.

DR. POWER O'CONNOR. And, I say, Mary, I wish Diamond had taken up this case. I'm all right, of course, but Diamond did a special course in these cases. If I'm right in my conjectures I may want a second doctor. (*Enter KIRWAN.*)

KIRWAN. Now, doctor, the nurse has her in hands.

DR. POWER O'CONNOR. Righto. (*Exits house.*)

KIRWAN. She's quieter. Everything will pass off all right.

MRS. DIAMOND. Yes, she's in good hands.

KIRWAN (*a little irritably*). Yes, she is in good hands. Where is my paper, Mary?

MARY. In the shop. I'll get it. (*Exits. KIRWAN sits down. MRS. DIAMOND stands perfectly still, watching him narrowly. KIRWAN regards her uneasily once or twice.*)

KIRWAN (*irritably*). Won't you sit down, Mrs. Diamond?

MRS. DIAMOND. It is scarcely worth while. I only stayed in case I might be of some use to Mary. (*She remains looking at him. He begins to fidget.*)

KIRWAN. Would you sit, or walk about, or do something, ma'am?

MRS. DIAMOND. I'm not in the way, am I?

KIRWAN. No—not in the way. But a person standing like a graven image gives me the nerves! It's like having some strange thing in the house—an owl or something—watching and waiting and speculating. (*MARY comes from shop.*)

MARY. There is the paper. (*DR. POWER O'CONNOR comes from house.*)

DR. POWER O'CONNOR. Kirwan—I don't like the look of the case.

KIRWAN. Why in God's name do you say that to me? Why don't you——

DR. POWER O'CONNOR. Easy, now, old man. Don't get excited. But I must have another doctor. There may be a necessity for an operation.

KIRWAN. Why didn't you say that at first?

DR. POWER O'CONNOR. I'm saying it now because the time has come to say it.

KIRWAN. Then get another doctor. What are you all depending upon me for?

MARY. Keep calm, John. It will be all right. I must go to Fanny. (*Exits.*)

DR. POWER O'CONNOR. What about sending for Dr. Canovan?

MRS. DIAMOND. He is gone abroad.

DR. POWER O'CONNOR. And the nearest doctor to Garrymore is twelve miles away, and it might take two days to catch him. This is an infernal nuisance.

KIRWAN. What in God's name is to be done. (*Enter MARY*).

MARY. John, Mrs. Cooney takes a very serious view of the case, and she is a woman of experience.

DR. POWER O'CONNOR. Now, don't get alarmed. It's not as bad as all that. If Diamond was about— (*Enter NURSE*.)

NURSE. May I have more light ?

MARY. Certainly.

NURSE. I will take this lamp to save time. (*She takes lamp from table. As she goes out she turns to doctor quickly.*) Now, doctor, quick, the patient. (*He follows her out. The room is left in semi-darkness.*)

KIRWAN. What about Dr. Diamond, as he says ? I never thought of him.

MRS. DIAMOND. No, you didn't, Mr. Kirwan. . . . Luke has gone away to the country.

KIRWAN. Lord God, a man would think they were all scattered on purpose.

MARY. He may not have started yet. I will run myself and see. Perhaps I could persuade him to come. (*Exits, door to shop.*)

KIRWAN. Persuade him to come ! What is the woman talking about It's enough to make a man crazy. What made her say that ?

MRS. DIAMOND. Because he might not come.

KIRWAN. Might not come ? He's not inhuman is he ?

MRS. DIAMOND. No, but he is human and free to withhold his services and his skill.

KIRWAN. Withhold, when a thing like this happens ? I tell you, he dare not.

MRS. DIAMOND. If I were Luke I would not come. I would pay back kind with kind.

KIRWAN. That's nice charity.

MRS. DIAMOND. It is a hard world, John Kirwan, and

when we grow old we like to pay back hardness with hardness, to set up strength against strength.

KIRWAN. He will come for Mary. I am satisfied of that. I can make my mind easy. (*He sits down.* MRS. DIAMOND *regards him as before for some time.*) For the sake of God sit down. It's worse without the light.

MRS. DIAMOND. What is the matter with you ?

KIRWAN. Nothing is the matter with me, but I feel as if something was waiting to spring at me.

MRS. DIAMOND. That is your imagination—or *else your conscience*

KIRWAN. It's pure imagination. But sit down all the same. (*She sits by table.*)

MRS. DIAMOND. Mary may bring him. If she does I am not going to say a word.

KIRWAN (*more sympathetically*). In a way I can understand your feelings, Mrs. Diamond.

MRS. DIAMOND. I wonder can you ?

KIRWAN. I know you have had a hard struggle, and credit is due to you for the way you brought Luke up and educated him. He will get on well yet in this town, never fear.

MRS. DIAMOND. He is going away.

KIRWAN. Going away ?

MRS. DIAMOND. To Australia, in another day but one.

KIRWAN. Well, it's a queer ending to your struggle. But I suppose it's all for the best.

MRS. DIAMOND. It's best for him to leave this place. I know it well. There is no fear of any one of us ever ending any better than we began. We know how to keep each other down. We are all chained to our little door-posts in Garrymore.

KIRWAN. That is a bitter way to speak. But, dear knows, I don't blame you, Margaret Diamond. You had all our pity when your husband was taken from you and Luke only a child.

MRS. DIAMOND. I had no pity for myself.

KIRWAN. I remember the night of the wake and the

way you sat by the bed, still as a statue. I turned to Fanny and said, "She has not cried a tear; her heart must be broken." It was a terrible affliction.

MRS. DIAMOND. I did not think so.

KIRWAN. The world knew it was.

MRS. DIAMOND. I had no sorrow when Thomas Diamond died.

KIRWAN. You surprise me, ma'am.

MRS. DIAMOND. My husband was no good to me. He was a useless sot, and he would have held me and my son down if he had lived.

KIRWAN. The dead should be allowed to rest.

MRS. DIAMOND. He drank and wasted, and the only feeling I had when he died was one of great quietness. If my heart was broken it was not broken because Thomas Diamond died, but because he had ever lived.

KIRWAN. That is a queer thought to run in any person's mind.

MRS. DIAMOND. The only thing he ever gave me that did not rankle was the child, Luke. . . . But even the child—I was afraid of him, too.

KIRWAN. Afraid of your own child?

MRS. DIAMOND. I was afraid he would grow up to be like his father. But as he grew I saw something else, some look in the child eyes, some intelligence, some movements in the little body, that I knew meant something nearer to myself.

KIRWAN. 'Twas always said he took after you wonderful.

MRS. DIAMOND. It was then my heart—a heart pent up, starved—went into the child. You have children, John Kirwan. But I was the mother of only one child, and I hungered for him and the hunger grew with the years. I vowed he would be something more than his father was or I was. I watched over him, directed him, beat down even poverty for him, and I did it myself. I half famished, I became miserly, I lived on slops and scraps, I put shilling to shilling, I denied myself everything, and I gloated over it all as he passed from child

to boy and boy to man. I saw him made into the thing I dreamt about him. I saw him put above what you call his place. I was well hated for all that.

KIRWAN. I don't think all that was wholesome, ma'am. It was not natural.

MRS. DIAMOND. Oh, you're a very good proper man, John Kirwan, and your wife, Fanny, is a very religious woman. I could not help thinking what a great place she was making for herself in heaven when I'd see her hurrying down every evening to the chapel to say her prayers and light candles at the shrines.

KIRWAN. Fanny was always a good woman.

MRS. DIAMOND. And you were always a good man. You have the respect of the people. You stand well in the favour of Garrymore.

KIRWAN. I don't see why I should not.

MRS. DIAMOND. Even my son, Luke, thinks well of you in spite of what you did to him.

KIRWAN. That's past and gone. I followed my own inclinations.

MRS. DIAMOND. You did the proper thing of course. You were never known to do anything else. You are known to be honest as the sun.

KIRWAN. I wish, ma'am, you would talk about something else.

MRS. DIAMOND. I meant to have my say with you sooner or later. My struggle is over now. My son is going from me. I am a broken, miserable woman.

KIRWAN. For God's sake don't start to cry. I can't bear that.

MRS. DIAMOND. Don't fear. I have not cried in forty years. I have had too much hardness, and I know too much about the world. I know by my own reason, too, that you are not the honest man people take you for.

KIRWAN. No one has ever dared to point the accusing finger at me.

MRS. DIAMOND. Perhaps not. I don't want to do it either. You can answer the accusation of your own con-

science. It will put you in the dock in a way I could never do it. You and your wife trampled on my hopes to your own gains and ends. You broke your word and trust, and I believe you fingered with the rest the gold that put over the poor the doctor that you and your wife would not now have in your house if you could.

KIRWAN. A woman who tramples on the grave of her own husband cannot be expected to have a decent thought of others. (*Enter NURSE.*)

NURSE. Has Dr. Diamond come ?

KIRWAN. No.

NURSE. Dr. Power O'Connor is very anxious. There is no time to be lost.

KIRWAN. Good God ! What is keeping Mary ? She has me worried to death the whole evening. I'll have to go myself. I'll run across. (*Exits, door to shop.*)

MRS. DIAMOND. Is she very ill, nurse ?

NURSE. She is suffering much.

MRS. DIAMOND. There is no—danger ?

NURSE. With proper skill, I think But it is better to say no more, Mrs. Diamond. (*Enter DR. DIAMOND from shop breathlessly.*)

DIAMOND. I came as soon as I could. A messenger on a bicycle overtook the car, I jumped on the machine, and scorched back.

NURSE. You had better come to the patient at once, doctor. (*Exits. DIAMOND follows her.*)

MRS. DIAMOND. Luke !

DIAMOND (*turning back at door*). Well, mother ?

MRS. DIAMOND. Why have you come ?

DIAMOND. Why not ?

MRS. DIAMOND. Can you ask ? Have you forgotten ?

DIAMOND. Mary came for me. Power O'Connor is anxious to have me, Kirwan is terribly upset.

MRS. DIAMOND. What are all these people to you ? Some of them have driven you out of this place with weapons more cowardly than sticks or stones.

DIAMOND. I can't think of that now.

MRS. DIAMOND. If I were you I would have declined to come. I would have paid them back in their own measure.

DIAMOND. Nonsense, mother. You are too hard.
(*Exits.*)

MRS. DIAMOND (*going to fire, crouching over it, her hands claw-like in the light of flames.*) Hard—oh, I'm hard; and if I am who has made me so? . . . Fanny Kirwan has five children. The pains of child-birth have not softened her heart. I had one child. . . . Oh, they've broken me at last—and I'm hard!

(*Enter KIRWAN from shop.*)

KIRWAN. Well, your son came after all.

MRS. DIAMOND. Yes, he came.

KIRWAN. He has more heart than his mother.

MRS. DIAMOND. He is young.

KIRWAN. He is not so like you as you thought.

MRS. DIAMOND. The world will teach him yet. (DR. POWER O'CONNOR *enters, pulling on his coat.*)

DR. POWER O'CONNOR. A glass of brandy for the Lord's sake.

KIRWAN. Here! (*He pours it out.* DR. POWER O'CONNOR *gulps it down.*) What is the matter?

DR. POWER O'CONNOR. Don't look at me that way, Kirwan. I've had about enough of it. I want a mouthful of air.
(*Exits shop door.*)

MRS. DIAMOND (*a sudden sharpness in her voice that is ominous*). What has happened?

KIRWAN. Why do you speak that way? What can have happened?

MRS. DIAMOND. The look in his face. He's scared, like a criminal. He's the man you put over my son, the one you gave to the poor. (*Enter MARY from shop.*)

MARY. Why has Dr. Power O'Connor gone? He almost ran through the shop. He would not speak.

KIRWAN. You all ask me. You make me crazy. I never put in such a day, never felt such torment. (DR. DIAMOND *enters. He is solemn faced.*)

DIAMOND. I'm sorry, John——

MARY. What is it, Luke? Surely——not that.

KIRWAN (*storming*). Hold your tongue, woman. You are raising alarms the whole day, torturing me and terrifying me, upsetting the whole place. I'll have no more of it. (*Enter NURSE. KIRWAN grows suddenly calm.*) What are you. . . . What are you all standing like that for? . . . Why. . . . My God! (*He steadies himself at table.*)

MRS. DIAMOND. This cannot be a judgment?

KIRWAN (*storming again*). What are you saying? You are here the whole evening, haunting the place like a spectre, taunting me, lacerating me, now prophesying a judgment! I'll go stark mad.

DIAMOND. John, you must calm yourself. You must be prepared——

MARY. Oh, Luke, not that—not that. Fanny is not . . .

KIRWAN. What about Fanny? Why don't you go to her? What are you doing here, Mrs. Cooney? Why don't you look after Fanny?

NURSE. I can do no more for her now, sir. Mrs. Kirwan is dead.

MARY (*wringing her hands*). Oh, poor Fanny, poor Fanny!

KIRWAN. It's not true. I was speaking to her two hours ago. Where is that fellow, where is Power O'Connor? By the Lord God, I'll take him by the throat and choke him.

DIAMOND. Now, John, you have only to face this like a man.

KIRWAN. You came, Diamond.

DIAMOND. I came too late. I'm sorry, very sorry, God knows.

MRS. DIAMOND. It is a judgment.

MARY. The poor little children that were so fond of her!

MRS. DIAMOND. You must be a mother to the children

now, Mary. Let us go to the room and say a prayer for the dead. Let us ask God to forgive her her trespasses. (*Exit MRS. DIAMOND, MARY and NURSE.*)

KIRWAN (*calm, but dazed*). I can't realise it, Luke. But I'll do as you say—I'll try to bear up like a man.

DIAMOND. I'm sorry I could not have done more for you.

KIRWAN. Fanny is dead. . . . If you were in time could you have saved her?

DIAMOND. I could not have saved the life of the child. . . . But the mother's life——don't press the question, John. (*KIRWAN groans as he sinks into a chair.*)

CURTAIN.

The Bribe was first produced in the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, by the National Theatre Society on Thursday December 18th, 1913, the following being the cast :—

MRS. DIAMOND	<i>Nora Desmond.</i>
MARY KIRWAN	<i>Kathleen Drago</i>
MRS. KIRWAN	<i>Eileen O'Doherty</i>
JOHN KIRWAN	<i>Arthur Sinclair</i>
DR. LUKE DIAMOND	<i>Fred O'Donovan</i>
DR. POWER O'CONNOR	<i>Sydney J. Morgan</i>
DR. JACK POWER O'CONNOR	<i>Philip Guiry</i>
MR. TOOMEY	<i>H. E. Hutchinson</i>
A PAUPER	<i>Michael Coniffe</i>
MRS. COONEY	<i>Eithne Magee</i>
POOR LAW GUARDIANS	<i>J. M. Kerrigan,</i> <i>J. A. O'Rourke, U. Wright, A. Patrick</i> <i>Wilson, Farrell Pelly, &c.</i>
PRODUCER	<i>Lennox Robinson</i>

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